



*Every 35 minutes,
an older adult dies from a fall*

MONTANA MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO ADDRESS FALL PREVENTION

The Challenge

Falls remain the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injury for older Americans. Falls threaten seniors' safety and independence and generate enormous economic and personal costs. CDC's Injury Center monitors falls, fall-related injuries, and associated costs, reporting:

- In 2007, more than 18,000 older Americans died from injuries related to unintentional falls.
- In 2008, about 2.1 million nonfatal fall injuries in people 65 and older were treated in emergency departments and over 550,000 of these patients were subsequently hospitalized.
- The total cost of fall injuries for older Americans was \$19 billion in 2000. By 2020, the annual direct and indirect cost of fall injuries is expected to reach \$54.9 billion.

Fall Facts in Montana

In Montana:

- In 2006, Montana had the fourth highest fall fatality rate for all ages in the United States.
- The death rate due to falls is higher among persons aged 65 and older and highest among those age 85 and older.
- Nearly half of fall-related deaths occur in the home.
- Among deaths due to a fall, one in three is from falling on the same level.

Montana Fall Prevention Workgroup Responds

Falling is NOT an inevitable result of aging. Through evidence-based interventions, practical lifestyle adjustments, and community partnerships we can substantially reduce the number of falls.

In July 2009, the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services Injury Prevention Program was established where fall prevention for older adults was identified as a primary focus for prevention interventions. In the fall of 2009, a workgroup of key stakeholders was convened to provide guidance on the development and implementation of a state-wide fall prevention program. Specifically, the goals of the workgroup are to:

- Build a strong network of stakeholders from a broad constituency interested in fall prevention.
- Identify available resources and opportunities to collaborate on fall prevention efforts.
- Provide input and recommendations to the Department regarding the development of a fall prevention program for the state of Montana.
- Assist with the evaluation development and analysis for fall prevention efforts.
- Support educational and training efforts to increase the public's awareness of fall prevention.

The Montana Fall Prevention Workgroup is a member of the [Falls Free™ Coalition](#), a national collaborative effort to educate the public and support and expand evidence-based programs and interventions that help communities, states, federal agencies, non-profits, businesses, and older adults and their families fight back against falls. Montana is one of 31 State Coalitions on Fall Prevention and 70 national organizations making up the Falls Free™ Coalition, working to address this growing public health issue.

Fall Prevention Awareness Day

Montana is one of 34 states reaching out to communities throughout the nation to raise awareness about fall prevention during the week of September 20-26th, 2010. Fall Prevention Awareness Day is September 23, 2010. The following activities are planned in communities throughout Montana to support Fall Prevention Awareness:

- Operation Medicine Cabinet - Prescription Drug Take Back Campaign Sept 25, 2010
- Aging Horizon televised program dedicated to fall prevention awareness to be aired the week of September 20th on local channels
- Lowes Home Supply stores around the state hosting Fall Prevention displays and promoting home safety
- Community health fairs to conduct hearing, vision, balance and strength, medication and fall risk assessments
- Press releases and fall prevention articles submitted to local and statewide newsletters

Looking Ahead

Montana continues to pursue the following long-term goals:

- Encourage older adults to adopt healthy behaviors, become more physically active, have their medications reviewed, and make appropriate safety modifications to their homes.
- Encourage health care providers to assess all older patients for fall risk factors.
- Educate and train caregivers and family members in strategies to reduce falls.
- Increase availability of evidence-based fall prevention and physical activity programs in community-based organizations serving older adults.
- Improve mechanisms for health care providers to refer older adults to community-based fall prevention and physical activity programs.
- Empower all individuals to promote fall prevention strategies in their communities.

For more information visit <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/ems/>
or contact Bobbi Perkins, 406-444-4126.

Developed by the National Council on Aging & the Montana DPHHS Fall Prevention Workgroup

The National Council on Aging is a nonprofit service and advocacy organization headquartered in Washington, DC. NCOA is a national voice for older Americans—especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged—and the community organizations that serve them. For more information, please visit www.ncoa.org.